

BUILDING THE VISION

A Series of AZTech ITS Model Deployment Success Stories for the Phoenix Metropolitan Area

NUMBER THIRTEEN

Permanent Record

Documenting and Archiving the AZTech Project

The Challenge:

In many ways, AZTech is a monumental accomplishment. As one of four national initiatives selected by the federal government to showcase the leading edge of intelligent transportation systems, AZTech fostered an unprecedented and extensive partnership between the public and private sectors. By design, AZTech will have a significant impact on the quality of life in the Phoenix metropolitan area by reducing travel time and costs, as well as improving traveler safety and air quality.

Any project of this magnitude could reasonably be expected to generate a massive amount of documentation. And while keeping track of all records from beginning to end would present a significant challenge, reconstructing everything after the fact would be an absolutely arduous undertaking. However, it's not unusual with a project of this size for the immediate focus to be fixed so firmly on deployment that no concerted effort at archiving is made until after the ribbon-cutting ceremony. And for an enterprise such as AZTech that involves collaborative efforts by more than 30 diverse partners, records and documents are likely to be in a variety of formats and dispersed to a multitude of locations.

"With many major technical projects, the documentation is lacking at the end of the project," said Pierre Pretorius, AZTech program manager. "To retroactively try to get project recording and documentation is almost an impossible task. The key is to keep it up to date from the start."

To efficiently compile a comprehensive, standardized and centralized record of its two-year implementation period, AZTech sought to develop its own unique system of documentation and archiving.

The Solution:

To stay ahead of the game, AZTech made an early priority of keeping its archives current. A central repository was established for the project's various plans, reports, agendas and other documents. "Project documentation was kept up to date from day one," said Pretorius.

Collected in the AZTech archives are the full spectrum of the project's written communications. The result is the official record of the AZTech project from its launch in September 1996 until its implementation in October 1998. "We really wanted to have full written documentation of everything that went on in the AZTech project from beginning to end," said Carl Jager, AZTech program assistant. Jager has been dedicated to keeping the archives up to date. This required extensive coordination with AZTech's roster of public and private partners, retrieving documents and when necessary converting them to a standardized electronic format. He also developed an interactive archiving system that conveniently compiles all project documentation on a single compact disc (CD).

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The CD organizes the archives into several main categories, including more than 50 technical briefs; nearly 30 presentations made by AZTech officials to organizations across the country and overseas; work orders; agendas and minutes from all committee meetings; monthly and quarterly reports; formal papers prepared about AZTech; and transcripts of a two-day design review of AZTech conducted by the federal government.

The Benefits:

By keeping ongoing archives of all project documentation, AZTech fostered efficiency, accuracy and cost savings. Its innovative CD archives encapsulate all project records in a convenient, compact format. “The CD puts all the project’s technical documents at your fingertips,” said Pretorius. Containing nearly 350 megabytes of information, the disc includes as many as 300 individual documents.

The interactive CD offers easy access through a browser and hyper links that allow readers to jump quickly from one section to another, or from a major category to any of its subdivisions. “Everything is indexed and cross-referenced, so it’s very easy to use,” said Jager. “You can find any component of AZTech that you want to know about. Just click on a link with your computer mouse and it takes you there.”

All project partners will receive the AZTech CD archive, which also will be presented at various conferences and linked to systems of the Maricopa County Department of Transportation. “We need this kind of documentation both for the public interest and our own archives,” said Jager. The AZTech archives also are available on the Arizona Department of Transportation’s home page on the Internet at <http://www.azfms.com/>.

As an international showcase for state-of-the-art Intelligent Transportation Systems, the AZTech Model Deployment Initiative has documented numerous success stories. To learn more, visit the AZTech home page on the Internet at <http://www.azfms.com>.